

# Hawaiian Gazette

EST. MODUS IN REBUS.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1889.

## BOOKS AND READING IN HAWAII.

This is a great country for consumption of reading matter. People learn abroad to read a variety of daily papers pretty regularly, and so have begotten a certain craving. Here, the dailies are not forthcoming in any alarming quantities—in the rural districts, not at all. So the appetite feeds on what else can be had. A large assortment of weeklies and pictorial journals are taken. The leading monthlies have a great circulation. Some of our friends have a fine zest for that wonderful little paper, the *Youth's Companion*—not so very young people either. There has been a large importation of the cheap editions of standard novels, which appear to have worked off well. The later most popular novels are always scarce, and seldom appear in our bookstores. We do not remember, for instance, to have seen Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde except in private hands or a public library, and yet there are probably few people here but have read this book. A neighbor of ours who is somewhat omnivorous in his reading, says he has never seen more than the cover of Robert Elsmere, if he has seen as much. He claims, however, to have read at least twenty reviews of the book. From Gladstone to Joseph Cook. He is satiated with the topic and never wants to see the inside of the volume itself.

There are many cultivated readers among us, who regulate their mental pabulum, and feed on stronger as well as lighter literature. Hawaii has no great crop of authors, though as many perhaps in proportion to white population as most countries. A history or two, a scientific work or so, a few bits of reminiscences, essays, tours, about cover the whole. There are undoubtedly many who highly and even artistically appreciate what is specially meritorious in fiction or poetry, if not so many what belongs to science or philosophy. Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson probably has more such readers here in proportion to our numbers, than in any other city he could visit. The Master of Ballantrae, though a man of mettle, is recognized as akin to Mr. Hyde. Yet some people wonder how a country laird could so rapidly develop the remorseless pirate, devoid of mercy and bereft of honor, held back from the pit neither by a pure love nor by a noble heritage. It is, however, in that tremendous lapse from a high moral endowment, that the interest is centered either in Ballantrae or Hyde. Satan is interesting because an angel fallen; as mere born devil he would be simply hideous.

We presume Mr. Stevenson will not make leading characters of any of the excessive outgrowths of savage life he may hear of in his Oceanic wanderings: such for example as the deified sorcerer in Nukaliwa, who roosted in his mountain den, and roared for the cannibal rations which his terrified worshippers brought him. The stem from which grew such pagan fiends never had grace or beauty enough to make us bemoan their doom. Notwithstanding certain external features of savage life, particularly in Polynesia, which are picturesque and even fascinating, it is in its essence too squalid, too bestial, to lend itself to any serious and faithful use of the novelist. Yet it is not safe to say what a genius like Mr. Stevenson's may weave from it. If he could get at the true inwardness of the Hale Nana, he might possibly lay hold of some useful points in that line. We shall all be interested in the coming fruit of his Pacific experiences.

## COMMUNICATION VERSUS ISOLATION.

In returning to this subject and considering who is to blame for the defects in our postal arrangements, it should be said at the outset that, to a certain limited extent, no one is to blame. A country, a great majority of whose adult population consists of Chinese, illiterate Portuguese and recently civilized Polynesians, scattered over half a dozen islands, cannot have as perfect a mail service as where the population is more homogeneous in composition and compact in location. We must not expect impossibilities. But this idea should not be pushed too far and made an excuse for torpidity and inaction. If we cannot have all the conveniences enjoyed by the people

of London and New York, it is no reason why we should not have all that our conditions and means will permit. We should not render ourselves liable to the imputation of being satisfied with the old foggy arrangements that may have been entertaining enough when our grandfathers were in pinafores.

The fault does not lie at the door of the Postmaster-General, who does the best he can with the means at his disposal. Neither can we blame the steamship companies, who do all that their contracts require, and sometimes more, frequently holding back their vessels for hours in order to take mails which might otherwise have to lie over for a week.

That the local mail service of this Kingdom does not make reasonably close connections with the incoming and outgoing foreign steamers is something for which the fault lies with the people themselves, who have not been educated up to modern ideas in this respect.

They have only to demand of their nobles and representatives in the Legislature the like privileges with the inhabitants of out of the way localities in other countries, and they shall have them.

Steamships, railroads and stage coaches are heavily subsidized in all parts of America, for the purpose of serving remote districts with such mail and other accommodations as they require. The thoughts and doings of the great centers of population are transmitted direct by means of correspondence and periodicals to the fireside of the backwoodsman, and are not, as in the Hawaiian islands, moss-grown with age by the time they get there. If the constituents of a legislator in America had to wait ten days for their weekly papers printed in the capital, and within a twenty-four hours' journey of their homes; that legislator's return home after the adjournment of the assembled wisdom would not be a happy re-union. He would be called to account in a way more pointed than pleasant, and therefore consigned to the bosom of his family with the unanimous verdict of "no good."

Amongst the 207 petitions presented to the Hawaiian Legislature at its last session, not one worth naming was reported to have prayed for arrangements to be made by the government for better mail communication between Honolulu and the country districts, or anywhere else.

If this shows that the people are well satisfied with things as they are, then, so much the worse for the people. It indicates that they are not advancing in intelligence and patriotic public spirit as they would like us to think they are. Certain it is that without roads, telegraphs and other ready means of communication between all parts of the islands, the "great country" which we fondly imagine this is going to be lies far away in the dim and distant future. In that case it is evident that there is no remedy except that those who regard themselves as leaders in all that pertains to progress should take the initiative, and act for the inert and too-easily satisfied people.

## POSTAGE STAMPS.

There are about six thousand different descriptions of postage stamps in existence. The museum of the Berlin post-office alone contains between four and five thousand specimens, of which half are from Europe, and the remainder divided between Asia, Africa, America and Australia. What country carries off the palm for absurdity and grotesqueness of artistic design and inferiority of execution, we are not told, but if the collection is faithfully representative, the variety of ugliness must be considerable. Some of the stamps, it appears, bear coats-of-arms, and other emblems, partially borrowed from the heavens above, the earth beneath, and the waters under the earth—stars, eagles, lions, horses, serpents, railway trains, dolphins, and other "fearful wild-fowls." There are, moreover, the effigies of five Emperors, eighteen Kings, three Queens, one Grand Duke, several inferior titled rulers, and many Presidents. In so many countries and nationalities some really attractive specimens must have been elaborated, but, if so, it is a pity our authorities did not borrow a hint or two from the best; for anything more bold, monotonous and commonplace than the British series of postage stamps down to the latest issue cannot be well imagined.—[London Paper-Makers' Journal.]

Hawaiian stamps consist of three series, numerals, copperplate and steel. The numerals were the earliest issues, from 1851-5, and some of them are very rare, being valued as high as \$250 for a single stamp. Of these there are many spurious imitations. The copperplate stamps were issued from 1853 to 1860. The steel portraits of Hawaiian sovereigns are generally conceded to be among the finest postage stamps issued by any government, and no collection is complete without the entire Hawaiian issues from 1851-85. The most complete collection of stamps on these islands is believed to be that

of Mr. C. A. Brown, which numbers over 6,000. We understand that this collection has been sent to the Paris Exposition, insured for \$1,000, which is about half its value.

## THE THREATENED EXODUS.

Letters written by the managers of plantations in the Hilo district to their agents in Honolulu deny flatly that the wages of their Portuguese laborers have been reduced, that any men of that nationality have been discharged to make room for Japanese or others, or that they are concerned in any such "freeze-out" as has been represented. We have been shown several letters of this character. They were written in the regular course of business, and not intended for publication. We have been permitted to read them, however, and make copies of such portions as seemed to bear directly upon the statements that have appeared. One manager writes as follows:

I have just received yours of 5th inst. in regard to Portuguese exodus. We have no more to do here than we have already done to be in line with the action of the Planters' Labor and Supply Co. We have never changed the rate of wages from that established three or four years ago when their contracts began to expire. It was \$22 per month then, and so it is to-day. We have as yet never discharged a Portuguese laborer except for laziness or disorderly conduct, and then only after repeated warnings, and in most instances have taken the discharged men back after they had been the rounds. We have men here who have tried their fortunes four times elsewhere, and they are at work here to-day. By a rule, after two discharges or voluntary departures, they come back the third time at \$20 a month for three months. We refuse new applications when our quarters are full, or when we have enough hands, and just now we are refusing till planting time which will be in two weeks.

Our shifting labor proper is Chinese and Japanese. Between seasons we kept but three Chinamen, but not a Portuguese was discharged except for cause. At this moment we are just about equal as to Portuguese, Japs and Chinese. I can get Chinese for \$18. Our last hiring is at that rate and we take only picked men. The most of our middle men such as teamsters, rough mechanics and trusty men at odd jobs are Portuguese who have extra wages, and we take a good deal of pains to encourage them. They are consummate strikers when they are on top, and a good many otherwise good men have lost good jobs by this trait.

The writer then goes on to speak of his experiences in visiting the places of resort of the unemployed Portuguese in Hilo. Among other things he says:

In one gathering there were about fifteen present and there was only one man who cared to accept employment with a hoe. \* \* \* The rest were all Corporals, Sergeants and Lieutenants with pockets full of money.

A gentleman well and favorably known in the Islands, and who has the general oversight of three plantations, writes to another house in Honolulu concerning a party who had recently visited the district for the purpose of inquiring into this very matter. He says:

I showed him the pay roll of the plantations and gave him every opportunity to talk with the men. He goes away perfectly satisfied that the exodus of the Portuguese is not caused by low wages or bad treatment.

The same letter is interesting as containing particulars of the number of hands employed and the wages paid for the various grades of labor:

There are two hundred and sixty-seven Portuguese men, women and children working in the fields on the three plantations. There are eleven gang luns, eight of whom are Portuguese, and two of the others have Portuguese wives—lunas' wages \$30 to \$50. Portuguese carpenters \$30 to \$60. Firemen \$1.50 a day. Central men \$1.50 a day. Teamsters \$1 a day, and laborers \$20, \$22 and \$24 per month, except when a man is old and weak—then \$16 or \$18. There has been no cut down in wages of Portuguese here. \* \* \* My orders to the men are and have been for the last three weeks to take every Portuguese who applied for work.

That some Hilo planters are not acting in a liberal and enlightened way is quite possible. We have no positive knowledge on the subject. We are assured by those who are in a position to be well informed, that if such is the case the instances must be exceptional, and very few in proportion to the whole number. We desire nothing in this matter but the truth. We have reproduced the statements contained in the Aurora, against which it will be understood we make no charge of intentional misrepresentation, and we have published such evidence as has been furnished us in refutation of the same. Unfriendly relations between employers and employed are always to be deprecated. There can be no dispute as to the right of any number of Portuguese, large or small, to change their location if they believe their condition will be improved thereby. It would be most unfortunate, however, if any general movement toward emigration should be accompanied by the impression that the same was necessitated, or even in any appreciable degree stimulated, by unjust and illiberal treatment here. That such is the case we have seen thus far no sufficient proof. The matter is an important one, and we shall publish any additional evidence on either side, of which we may become possessed hereafter.

## THE TOADY.

We called attention a week or so ago to the blessed condition of this country. We pointed out that other countries possessed the genus *back biter*, while it was very hard here to find the man or woman who would say an ill word of a neighbor, let alone of a more successful man or a prettier and a better dressed woman. Yes! the Hawaiian Islands at large, and Honolulu especially, are blessed in this respect, the whole tone of social intercourse is so sweet. We never see of Becky, wife of Rawdon Crawley, "I wonder how that woman can dress so; I am sure her husband can't afford it," and then put our heads behind our fans and whisper the name of the Marquis of Steyne. We never see a man climb to legal or mercantile or any other eminence and tell the stranger who comes along: "Ah yes! Snooks! clever lawyer—clever lawyer. Yes, father swept a crossing; mother kept a mangle. That's where he learned the art of finishing up a witness *Mangles* them!" and then grin at our weak joke. Or again, "Binks! Yes, capital fellow Binks. Thousands a day now. I can remember when Binks used to drink like a fish and hadn't a cent in his pocket." Said Binks being now sixty and having once exceeded at the early age of twenty-two. But we can congratulate ourselves upon being free from the *back biter*. We can still more congratulate ourselves on being free from the genus *toady eater*. Of the two perhaps the toad eater is the most despicable though equally mischievous. That the toad eater should be entirely absent from our community seems rather curious. The ancient Hawaiian recognized the genus and had a special name for him. His toad eater was known as *hoopilineai*; so the animal must have had its habitat here at some time. How thankful we should be that the march of civilization, the spread of Christianity, has completely eradicated it from our midst. More especially must we be thankful when we consider that the climate is one in which the creature would flourish splendidly.

Studying the genus, we find that the toad eater first came into being in Spain. The original expression for a very officious and obsequious servant in that country was *mi todita*. The Briton thought the sound so applicable that avoiding translation he boldly resorted to the word and adopted it and a *toad* or *toady* came to mean "a cringing officious dependent, who will do all sorts of dirty work for you." But long before the days of the Spanish toad eater a somewhat similar animal flourished in Greece. There he went by the name of *sycofant* or *fig-blabber*. The origin of the word is curious. The Athenians had passed a law forbidding the export of figs. The law was a dead letter, but there were always a few mean fellows, who, for their own ends, impeached those who violated it, hence *sycofant* came to signify a government toady.

Such is the toad eater or sycofant. Away from here he flourishes and waxes fat and lusty. He goes to men in power and tells little tales of his fellow men, always to their detriment. Jones, upon whom yesterday McSycofant turned his back, becomes prime minister at the Court of Bagaboo. McS. rushes off to tell him how he has always thought that he, Jones, and he only had sufficient talent to occupy the place. He will whisper that that fellow Brown, who is Jones' secretary, is not to be trusted. He has heard him say unpleasant things of Jones' capacity. "What?" says McSycofant, "do you think of a man, a being on two legs, sir, calling itself a man, neglecting to wipe the dirt off the ministerial shoe with his pocket handkerchief? It is disgusting, sir! Permit me to lick off that little spot on the toe of your boot. May I carry the school books of your charming daughter?"—to tell the truth Miss J. is homely enough, but sensible. "Shall I send the carriage round for Her Excellency? My wife will be only too delighted to do any shopping for Her Excellency." At each pause the back goes to an angle of forty-five degrees.

But let poor Jones fall and McS. who has pestered him morning, noon and night sees him no longer. He wants to lick no more spots from Jones' boot, Miss Jones can carry her own books to school and Mrs. McSycofant will do no more errands. But Brown is now in power and away runs McS.

To shake with laughter ere the jest he hears,  
To pour, at will, the counterfeited tears;  
And as his patron hints 'tis cold or hot,  
To shake in dog-days, in December sweat!

Ah, blest Hawaii that can say: thank Heaven we have none such here.

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